

## Andrew Jackson to John Caldwell Calhoun, May 25, 1828, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### TO VICE-PRESIDENT CALHOUN.1

1 Copy. Handwriting of A. J. Donelson.

Hermitage, May 25, 1828.

*Dear Sir,* Your letter of the 30th April 1828, with Majr Lee's of the 30th to you, and your reply, has been recd.

These letters seemed only to require the remark that Majr Lee has never seen Mr Monroe's private correspondence with me, and that he is, therefore, left to place such a construction upon the public documents as he may conceive they justly deserve. Indeed that correspondence can be of little use in the interpretation of the orders by which I was governed, as on this subject it manifests nothing but an opinion entertained by the executive after they had been executed. Majr Lee has, however, shewn me a letter from Mr Monroe to him, in which he refers to this correspondence, and from which it may be inferred that he is desirous it should be made public. If this be the fact I can assure him that I have no objection to it.

I can have no wish at this day to obtain an explanation of the orders under which I acted whilst charged with the campaign against the seminole Indians in Florida. I viewed them, when recd. as plain and explicit; and called for by the situation of the country. I executed them faithfully, and was happy in reply to my reports to the Department of War to receive your approbation for it. If doubts as to their import had occurred, I should have asked for explanation before I undertook their execution, but none did occur, nor did I suppose that

## Library of Congress

any could be entertained by others, until I recd. the letter of the 19th July 1818 from Mr Monroe,<sup>2</sup> to which you have referred, and upon which I shall make a few remarks as Mr Monroe has also referred to it in his communication to the Majr.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. II., p. 382.

To this letter I replied in August<sup>3</sup> detailing at some length the views which I entertained of your orders, and referring to my communications from Florida where it is said that the measures I had adopted were in

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

pursuance of *your instructions, under a full conviction that they alone were calculated to give peace and security to our frontier*. Mr Monroes answer<sup>4</sup> contains this remark “that the best course to be pursued seems to me to be, for you (meaning me) to write a letter to the Dept of War in which I would state, that having reason to think that a difference of opinion existed between you and the executive relative to the extent of your powers, you thought it due to yourself to state your views of them and on which you acted. This will be answered so as to explain ours in a very friendly manner by Mr Calhoun etc. etc.” This letter was recd. on the 13th November, and in my answer to it of the 15th<sup>5</sup> I referred him to my dispatches from Ft Gadsden and particularly requested his attention to the closing paragraph where I expressly state that all my measures were in conformity to your instructions, and that of course if the ground be then taken that I had transcended my powers, that document would shew that I believed I had not. The fact is I never had the least ground to believe that any difference of opinion between the goverment and myself existed on the subject of my powers: so far from this, to the communications which I made shewing the construction which I placed upon them, there was not merely no difference of opinion indicated in the replies of the executive, but (as far as I received replies) an entire approval of the measures which I adopted. There can be no question that those measures are sustained by the principles of international law by which of course they were governed the moment I entered the foreign territory, and that the orders entrusting to my discretion

## Library of Congress

*“the speedy termination of the War, with exemplary punishment for crimes so unprovoked, and security to our bleeding frontier”*, anticipated this step, I had a right to believe, not only from an obvious construction of them, but from your approbation of my conduct. As Mr Monroe, however, seemed anxious to have on record some views of his own on the subject, my letter of the 15th Novbr. was concluded with the observation that “if the Secy. of War should address me a letter upon this subject I would answer it fully and promptly”. This letter never was received; and I have of course rested satisfied with the belief that I had executed my orders to the letter and spirit, and had obtained the approbation of my country.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 398.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 398. note.

After the free and confidential correspondence with Mr Monroe, as in part stated, I must confess that the knowledge of the letter of the 9th Sept. 1818 supposed to have been written to you, taken in connection with Mr Southards wine drinking speech and other rumors of the day, truly astonished me. I am not yet free from surprise, and upon some other occasion may ask you for an explanation, But I certainly can wish none in relation to orders which I think every military man will say were faithfully executed.

Agreeable to your request I enclose the letter alluded to of Mr Monroe which I suppose to have been directed to you. *I send it precisely as I recd. it:* Tho' I had before recd. a copy from a high and responsible source who could have had no agency in obtaining it, with the promise that the original should be sent to me, *I thought it a forgery:* but in the mean time the original came as enclosed, and was handed me by a Gentleman who as far as I know or have been informed never was employed in the War Dept, and if he is honest could have had no unfriendly views to you. When the copy was first sent, it was intimated that it was with your privity as from the signs of the times it might be necessary for self defence.

## Library of Congress

It may be possible that the Gentleman who informed you of its having been sent me, can explain how it came into my hands.

I have before stated that Majr Lee has shewn me yours and Mr Monroe's letters to him, and appears to have a desire to enter into a correspondence with you both on the subject of those orders. Should it meet your wishes I can have no objection: or if Mr Monroe requests it every private and confidential letter that ever passed between us shall be cheerfully laid before the nation. As Mr Monroe has referred the Majr to this correspondence if convenient, I will thank you to communicate to him my feelings on the subject; but without his request I shall not expose this correspondence to Majr. Lee, or any one else

I tender you my best salutation and am with great respect etc., yr friend